

## Organizational Commitment among the Top-Level College Basketball Players in Japan: Focused on Bases of Power and School Stages at High School and University

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**Abstract**

This study examined the degree of organizational commitment, the content of bases of power, and the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power of high school and university stages of elite university basketball players in Japan. One hundred sixty-six (166) university basketball players from the Kanto University Basketball Federation Men's Division 1 League took part in this study. They completed questionnaires about their high school and university coaches. For organizational commitment, affective commitment was significantly higher for the high school stage than the university stage ( $p < 0.001$ ). For bases of power, the university stage had significantly higher scores for expert power ( $p < 0.001$ ), while closeness-trust power and punishment power scores were significantly higher in the high school stage ( $p < 0.001$ ). For the high school stage, motivational power and for the university stage, motivational and expert powers showed as determinants of organizational commitment. In the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power in the high school stage, it was noteworthy that no significant influence of expert power was confirmed. The results suggested that it is important for coaches to rely on motivational and expert powers to increase organizational commitment. To nurture players who want to contribute to a team, it was speculated that coaches should constantly have strong motivation for coaching and make efforts to maintain relationships with their targets so that their attitude is understood by players, and also not neglect daily information gathering, training, and interaction among coaches to maintain high expertise in coaching.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the team sport of basketball, it is important to demonstrate the advanced skills and athletic abilities of individual players, along with sophisticated team chemistry to be successful (Sarlis & Tjortjis, 2020; Soares et al., 2020; Wootten et al., 2012; Zarić et al., 2018). Research in coaching has considered gaining insights into the techniques of group management that nurture players who can contribute to the construction of "team cohesion" while fully demonstrating their "individuality" are considered an important role of coaches (Fransen et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020; Nakazawa et al., 2022). This is because it is "impossible to overcome complex and diverse game situations with only the individual performance of the players" and "individual abilities can only be demonstrated in a setting of a group called a team" (Uchiyama, 2015). To examine the contribution being made by each individual to the team, it is important to focus on organizational commitment, which is an indicator of an individual's willingness to contribute to the organization to which they belong (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Porter et al., 1974). While group cohesiveness is a psychological approach that tries to maintain relationships by the will of the group, organizational commitment is a concept that represents the psychological distance that is narrowed by the members of the group, such as players in a team, having emotional connections due to factors such as school pride and loyalty to the

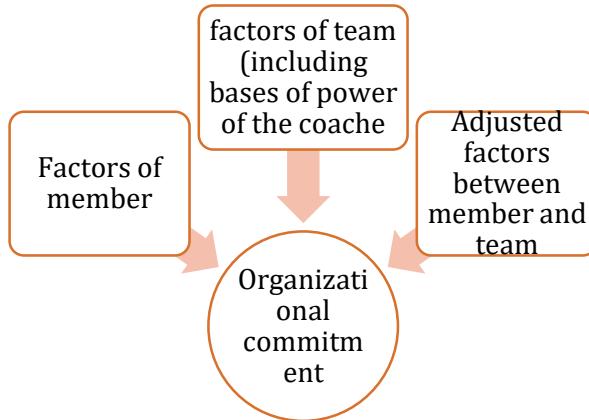
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organization or group (Anderson & Dixon, 2019; Thomsen et al., 2016; Van Mierlo & Van Hooft, 2020).

The determinants of organizational commitment consist of factors of the member, factors of the team, and adjusted factors between member and team (Bryant & Merritt, 2021; Tao et al., 1998), but this study treats the coaches' bases of power as a major element of factors of teams and examines the relationship between bases of power and organizational commitment (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Factors of Organizational Commitment (Tao et al., 1998)

Coaches exert various influences on players when coaching. In addition to demonstrating leadership in group maintenance and task achievement functions, it is believed that they exercise influence based on relationships with individual players (Rylander, 2016; Stodter & Cushion, 2019; Van Kleef et al., 2019). In this context, it is considered an important research topic to examine the relationship between the improvement of organizational commitment and the leadership of coaches, as well as the relationship between the improvement of organizational commitment and the bases of power of coaches. When engaging in sports, many players receive coaching from coaches. In doing so, coaches behave in a certain style, such as praising, scolding, or teaching to the players; and, the players may accept such coaching and be influenced by it (Bjørndal & Ronglan, 2018; Feng et al., 2023; Roberts et al., 2019). However, on the other hand, they may also reject and not be influenced by it. Argues that even if a coach has excellent knowledge and experience, the coaching may not be effective unless the player accepts it. In addition, whether or not a player accepts the guidance of a coach is not only a problem for the coach but also requires consideration of the mutual relationship as a foundation (Bissett & Tamminen, 2022; Heelis et al., 2020; Shoukry & Cox, 2018).

There are studies examining bases of power in sports settings (Groom et al., 2012; Rylander, 2015; Turman, 2006), and the importance of these studies is that power is perceived by those who are influenced (players), not something that those who influence (coaches) power. The concept of "bases of power" is to seek the source of influence from how players perceive and understand the characteristics and qualities of coaches. The approach of bases of power captures the influence of coaches from the perception, understanding, and evaluation of players; and, as a theory of coaches based on the relationship between coach and players, taking into account the perspective of each follower, which may produce different results from a theory of coaches that captures coaches uniformly (such as being democratic, authoritarian, or laissez-faire).

Regarding the power resources that foster organizational commitment, five types of power resources (specialist power, familiarity, and trustworthiness power, legitimate power, leadership motivation power, and punishing power), and reported analysis of Japanese top domestic college level players (Nakazawa et al., 2022). The characteristics of college-age players were: 1) they had a high level of organizational commitment, 2) they received guidance that relied on the professional forces and the leadership-motivated forces, and 3) the punishing force was in a negative relationship with the other four forces, and 3) leadership motivation and professionalism had a significant positive impact on organizational commitment (Cabarkapa et al., 2023; Popowczak et al., 2021; Stone, 2019).

Showed that coaches with controlling behavior tend to result in poor motivation and performance of athletes. High school players who are becoming adults may need less controlling

behavior from their coaches (Cheon & Reeve, 2013; Reynders et al., 2019). The present study has a possibility of opening answers to such questions as what is the level of organizational commitment to the team among top-level high school players in Japan? What kind of bases of power are often seen among top-level high school players? What kind of bases of power enhance organizational commitment among high school players? Many research topics can be considered for improving the coaching of high school players. To achieve this, players from top-tier university basketball teams may help answer these questions as these players played seriously during the high school stage as well as in their university stage, which makes it possible to compare their current situation (university) and past situation (high school). This research can contribute to the application of the Bases of Power theory in the context of sports teams. By analyzing how various forms of power (reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, expert) influence organizational commitment, the research results can provide strategic insight for coaches and team managers. This research can also provide a foundation for the development of better policies and coaching programs in the world of Japanese college basketball. The results can help sports organizations and educational institutions to improve the commitment and performance of basketball players. The purpose of this study is to analyze the degree of organizational commitment, the content of bases of power, and the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power of their high school and university stages among elite university basketball players.

## METHOD

### Participants

To select basketball players as a participant from highly competitive university basketball teams, 12 university basketball teams from the Kanto University Basketball Federation Men's Division 1 League (Kanto Men's Division 1), which is one of the most competitive Japanese university basketball leagues, were chosen for this study participants. Every basketball player playing for Kanto Men's Division 1 was asked to participate in this study ( $N = 464$ ), and 166 basketball players took part in this study (35.8% of all the players). This response rate is acceptable for academic online surveys (Nulty, 2008).

### Measures

The bases of power of the coaches in high school and university stages were measured based on the scale developed by Mori (Mori, 2005) for Japanese sports coaches, which is based on the theoretical framework of French and Raven (French & Raven, 1996). The organizational commitment scale was developed by Nakazawa (Nakazawa et al., 2022) for Japanese sports coaches based on the theoretical framework of Allen and Meyer (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

### Procedures

The survey contents were first explained to the coaches of the cooperating teams in advance, and their consent for the survey implementation was obtained. Then, via e-mail and LINE (a major SNS used in Japan), through the main office of each university, the outline and purpose of the survey and the URL of the questionnaire site were directed to the survey participants. Participants completed the survey online. The survey period was from July 29, 2020, to August 9, 2020. Regarding ethical considerations, the purpose of this study and the handling of response data were explained to participants as follows. Responses to questionnaires are voluntary, and they are allowed to stop at any time and only answer questions that they wish to answer. There is no question asking about their personal information, and that the data would be properly destroyed when the study is completed. The responses received will be statistically processed so that individuals cannot be identified.

Due to the constraints of the number of questions (variables) that can be set in an online survey, this study focused on the relationship between players and coaches among the factors of the basketball team and examined the relationship with organizational commitment. In light of the issues and objectives of this study, the relationship with the coach was grasped from the perception of the coach's bases of power by the players. They were asked to answer about coaches during high school (i.e., high school stage) and current university coaches (i.e., university stage). Ideally, all data on the basketball player perspective factors and the fit factors between players and a team should be

collected, and the relationship should be examined after controlling for factors other than the relationship between players and coaches, but due to methodological limitations, this study examined the relationship between the coach's bases of power and organizational commitment.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Mean and standard deviation, comparisons of mean differences, and multiple regression analysis were performed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Organizational commitment

Overall, in both high school and university stages, there was a tendency for Affective Commitment scores to be high for the high school stage (score = 6.07, SD = 1.06) and for the university stage (score = 5.46, SD = 1.37; on a 7-point scale). Comparing high school and university, we found that the Affective Commitment in the high school stage was significantly higher than in the university stage ( $p < 0.001$ ; [Table 1](#)).

**Table 1.** Degree of Organizational Commitment for High School and University Stages

	High School	University	
<b>Affective Commitment</b>	6.07	5.46	P<.001
<b>Continuance Commitment</b>	3.81	3.79	n.s.
<b>Normative Commitment</b>	5.85	5.88	n.s.

Bases of power were measured by five factors and 15 items. When looking at the university stage ([Table 2](#)), expert power score was significantly higher in university stage than high school stage (university score = 6.13, SD = 1.18; high school score = 5.50, SD = 1.62;  $p < 0.001$ ), while closeness-trust power (university score = 5.19, SD = 1.44; high school score = 5.70, SD = 1.43;  $p < 0.001$ ) and punishment power (university score = 2.06, SD = 1.48; high school score = 3.15, SD = 1.85;  $p < 0.001$ ) scores were significantly higher in high school stage than university stage.

**Table 2.** Bases of Power of High School and University Stages

	High School	University	
<b>Expert power</b>	5.50	6.13	p<.001
<b>Closeness-trust Power</b>	5.70	5.19	p<.001
<b>Legitimate power</b>	5.05	5.23	n.s.
<b>Willingness to Coach Power</b>	5.89	5.77	n.s.
<b>Punishment power</b>	3.15	2.06	p<.001

Before performing multiple regression analysis with organizational commitment as the objective variable and power resource factor as the explanatory variable, correlations between factors were examined ([Tables 3 and 4](#)). A constant positive correlation was observed between expert power, closeness-trust power, and willingness to coach power. On the other hand, punishment power was negatively correlated with those three powers.

**Table 3.** Correlations between Factors of Organizational Commitment and Power Resources for High School Stage. \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

Organizational commitment	Expert power	Closeness-trust Power	Legitimate power	Willingness to Coach Power	Punishment power
<b>Organizational commitment</b>	1.00				
<b>Expert power</b>	0.38**	1.00			

	Organizational commitment	Expert power	Closeness-trust Power	Legitimate power	Willingness to Coach Power	Punishment power
<b>Closeness-trust Power</b>	0.60**	0.59**	1.00			
<b>Legitimate power</b>	0.26**	0.34**	0.40**	1.00		
<b>Willingness to Coach Power</b>	0.63**	0.59**	0.86**	0.42**	1.00	
<b>Punishment power</b>	-0.16**	0.00	-0.15	0.34**	-0.17**	1.00

**Table 4.** Correlations between Factors of Organizational Commitment and Power Resources for University Stage. \*\* p < 0.01.

	Organizational commitment	Expert power	Closeness-trust Power	Legitimate power	Willingness to Coach Power	Punishment power
<b>Organizational commitment</b>	1.00					
<b>Expert power</b>	0.64**	1.00				
<b>Closeness-trust Power</b>	0.64**	0.64**	1.00			
<b>Legitimate power</b>	0.31**	0.29**	0.43**	1.00		
<b>Willingness to Coach Power</b>	0.69**	0.69**	0.84**	0.39	1.00	
<b>Punishment power</b>	-0.23**	-0.25**	-0.20**	0.05	-0.24**	1.00

Tables 5 and 6 are the results of multiple regression analysis (forced entry method) with organizational commitment as the dependent variable and bases of power as the independent variables. For the high school stage, motivational power ( $\beta = 0.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ; [Table 5](#)), and for the university stage, motivational power ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and expert power ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ; [Table 6](#)) were found to be significant determinants of organizational commitment. In the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power in the high school stage, it was noteworthy that no significant influence of expert power was confirmed.

**Table 5.** Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Organizational Commitment Variables for the High School Stage. †  $R^2 = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . \*  $p < 0.01$ .

	B	SE	$\beta$	p
<b>Expert power</b>	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.98
<b>Closeness-trust Power</b>	0.14	0.09	0.19	0.12
<b>Legitimate power</b>	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.81
<b>Willingness to Coach Power</b>	0.37	0.10	0.45	0.00
<b>Punishment power</b>	-0.04	0.05	-0.06	0.39

**Table 6.** Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Organizational Commitment Variables for the University Stage. †  $R^2 = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . \*  $p < 0.01$ .

	B	SE	$\beta$	p
<b>Expert power</b>	0.35	0.08	0.32	0.00
<b>Closeness-trust Power</b>	0.15	0.08	0.18	0.08

	B	SE	$\beta$	p
<b>Legitimate power</b>	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.73
<b>Willingness to Coach Power</b>	0.27	0.09	0.31	0.00
<b>Punishment power</b>	-0.05	0.05	-0.05	0.34

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the degree of organizational commitment, the content of bases of power, and the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power of high school and university stages among basketball players playing for the high division 1 league in Japanese universities to understand the relationship between coaches and players at different school stages, and examining a better relationship may provide important implications for examining a healthy coaching method that can maintain the well-being of high school players.

For Organizational commitment scores, there was a significant difference between the high school stage and the university stage despite both having relatively high scores. The continuance commitment tended to be relatively low for both stages. It was speculated that unlike in the workplace, there was not a strong tendency to perceive commitment to university sports teams as a calculative involvement based on an exchange relationship where rewards commensurate with or exceeding investment are obtained. As for bases of power, there was a strong tendency to perceive that they were receiving guidance based on expert and motivational powers (Table 2). It was speculated that the high expertise and involvement that inspire players were required as guidance for top-level university basketball players (Farrow et al., 2018). In addition, punishment power had a negative correlation with other bases of power except legitimate power (Table 3), and it was suggested that it might weaken organizational commitment. Punishment power may create players who superficially obey the guidance even if they are not convinced by the content or relationship of the guidance to avoid the disadvantages that arise from expressing it. As a result, there is a concern that coaching problems that should be solved may be overlooked or postponed. The multiple regression model explaining organizational commitment had a coefficient of determination of 0.56 ( $p < 0.001$ ), and it was considered to have a certain explanatory power (Table 5). The obtained model suggested that it is important for coaches to rely on motivational power and expert power to increase organizational commitment (Kim et al., 2020). To nurture players who want to contribute to the organization, it was speculated that coaches should constantly have strong motivation for coaching and make efforts to maintain relationships with their targets so that their attitude is understood by the players, and also not neglect daily information gathering, training, and interaction among coaches to maintain high expertise in coaching (Delrue et al., 2019; Nakazawa et al., 2022).

## Limitations and Future Challenges of this Study

This study was not able to systematically deal with the determinants of organizational commitment due to methodological limitations. In the future, it will be necessary to expand the explanatory variables, including the factors of the players and the fit factors between the players and the basketball team, and to advance the verification of the determinants of organizational commitment. By improving this, it is expected that it will be possible to analyze the determination power of the bases of power on organizational commitment by controlling the influence of other variables. In addition, this study had a problem with generalizing the results obtained when dealing with the improvement of organizational commitment in players and first targeted players with highly competitive ability, but whether the tendency in high-level Kanto Men's Division 1 is seen in groups with lower competitive ability, or whether it is seen in sports other than basketball, etc., it will be necessary to proceed with the examination in the future. Furthermore, since this model did not take into account the influence of past coaches on individual players, it was considered that in the future, it will be necessary to include the influence of past coaches in the model and explain the relationship between bases of power and organizational commitment with a more complete model.

## Contribution to Coaching Science: Implications for Coaching Practice

This research may also provide practical implications for managers and coaches in managing and guiding college basketball teams. By better understanding the factors that motivate and maintain

organizational commitment, they can design more effective management strategies. By combining these concepts, this research has the potential to provide a valuable contribution to the sport management literature and can form the basis for the development of policies and best practices in the management of collegiate basketball teams in Japan. To provide guidance based on "motivational power" and "expert power" that affect the improvement of organizational commitment, coaches are required to maintain their passion, face players with new perspectives every day, and constantly devote themselves to improving their coaching skills. In addition to systematically accumulating their own experience, updating their knowledge and coaching methods without neglecting them, and coaching with passion are considered to be the basics of coaching. Guidance based on punishment power may weaken players' organizational commitment and should be avoided. The situation where players superficially obey guidance that they are not convinced of to avoid disadvantages may cause problems in the relationship between coaches and players. Therefore, coaches need to enhance communication with individual players. The important thing is that coaches should not neglect to constantly have a correct perception of where their source of influence lies.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the degree of organizational commitment, the content of bases of power, and the relationship between organizational commitment and bases of power of high school and university stages among basketball players playing for the high division 1 league in Japanese universities to understand the relationship between coaches and players at different school stages, and examining a better relationship may provide important implications for examining a healthy coaching method that can maintain the well-being of high school players.

It was speculated that unlike in the workplace, there was not a strong tendency to perceive commitment to university sports teams as a calculative involvement based on an exchange relationship where rewards commensurate with or exceeding investment are obtained. In addition, punishment power had a negative correlation with other bases of power except legitimate power, and it was suggested that it might weaken organizational commitment. Punishment power may create players who superficially obey the guidance even if they are not convinced by the content or relationship of the guidance to avoid the disadvantages that arise from expressing it.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

SN was responsible for guiding the development of the concept, conducting research, and analyzing the results. YK was responsible for conceptualizing and carrying out the research.

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